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НА ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКАХ

МОСКВА

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FATHER
SERGIUS



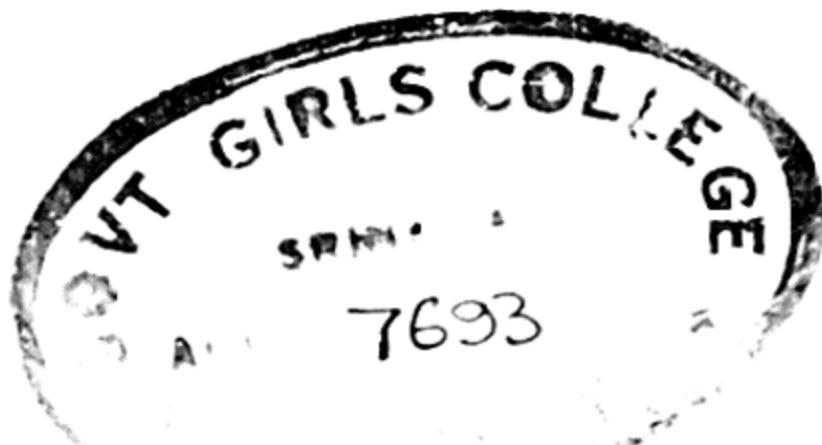
FOREIGN LANGUAGES
PUBLISHING HOUSE
MOSCOW

Translated by
Helen Altschuler

Designed by N. Grishin

ЛЕВ ТОЛСТОЙ

ОТЕЦ СЕРГИЙ



823

T574F

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics



I

It occasioned much surprise in St. Petersburg, in the forties, when a handsome Prince, commander of His Majesty's squadron of a regiment of Cuirassiers, for whom everyone predicted a royal adjutancy and a brilliant career under the Emperor, and whose marriage with a beautiful maid of honour, high in the favour of the Empress, had been set for the coming month, resigned his commission, broke off his engagement, made over to his sister his none-too-considerable estate, and left for a monastery, to become a monk. To people unacquainted with the reasons

behind it, all this seemed extraordinary, inexplicable; but to Prince Stepan Kasatsky himself it was so natural a decision that he simply could not have conceived of any other.

Stepan Kasatsky's father, a retired colonel of the Guards, died when Stepan was only twelve. His mother, for all her reluctance to send her son away from home, dared not disobey her husband, who had willed that, in the event of his death, she was not to keep the boy at home, but to enter him in the Cadet Corps. And so she sent him to the Corps, and herself, with her daughter Varvara, moved to St. Petersburg, to be near her son and be able to have him at home on holidays.

The boy was distinguished by marked ability and tremendous pride; and those qualities brought him to the fore both in his class-work—particularly mathematics, for which he had a special inclination—and in riding and the other military arts. He was handsome and, though unusually tall, well-built and of good carriage. In conduct, too, he would have been a model cadet, but for his hot temper. He had no taste for drink or debauchery, and he was wonderfully truthful. His only fault were the fits of rage which sometimes came over him, when he lost all self-control

and was transformed into a raging beast. On one occasion he all but threw a fellow-cadet through the window for poking fun at his collection of minerals. On another, he was very near to catastrophe; for he hurled a whole platter of cutlets at the steward, rushed at him, and, they say, struck him, for disavowing his own words and lying brazenly. He would certainly have been degraded to the ranks, had not the Corps director hushed up the whole affair and dismissed the steward.

At the age of eighteen he received his commission, in an aristocratic regiment of the Guards. Emperor Nikolai Pavlovich, who had noticed him while he was still in the Corps, singled him out for favour in the regiment as well, and it was generally expected that he would advance to a royal adjutancy. This he greatly desired, not only because he was ambitious, but chiefly because, while still in the Corps, he had conceived a passionate—yes, that was the only word for it: passionate—love for Nikolai Pavlovich. Every time Nikolai Pavlovich visited the Corps—and he was a frequent visitor; every time he came striding briskly in, a tall, full-chested figure of a man, in military uniform, with his hooked nose, his moustache, and his short side-

whiskers, greeting the cadets in that rolling voice of his, Kasatsky experienced a lover's rapture, the same rapture that he was later to feel in the presence of her he loved. Only the rapture Nikolai Pavlovich evoked was more intense. It made the boy eager to demonstrate his infinite devotion—to sacrifice anything, all of self, for the adored one. And Nikolai Pavlovich knew that he evoked this rapture, and deliberately encouraged it. He played with the cadets, gathered them around him, addressing them now with boyish simplicity, now as an elder friend, now with stately majesty. After Kasatsky's trouble with the steward Nikolai Pavlovich made no remark, but when the boy approached waved him away theatrically and, frowning, shook a finger at him; and as he was leaving, said:

"You must understand that I know. But there are things I do not wish to know. But they lie here."

And he laid a hand on his heart.

Afterwards, however, when the graduate cadets presented themselves to him, he made no more mention of the incident, but told them, as always, that they might come directly to him in case of need; that it was their duty to serve him and the Motherland faithfully;

and that he would remain always their greatest friend. As always, the cadets were touched; and Kasatsky, remembering what had gone before, wept real tears and vowed to devote his every energy to the service of his beloved Tsar.

When Kasatsky received his commission his mother and sister moved to Moscow, and later to their home in the country. Kasatsky made half of his property over to his sister. The income from the remainder served only to cover his expenses; for it was a gilded regiment in which he served.

Outwardly, Kasatsky seemed no more than a brilliant and ambitious young Guardsman of quite the usual type. Beneath the surface, however, he was engaged constantly in intricate and strenuous endeavour. It had been going on, this endeavour, since his early childhood—taking the most varied forms, but essentially always the same: the pursuit, in everything he did in life, of such attainment, such pre-eminence, as to evoke other people's praise and wonder. When it was a question of knowledge, of studies, he would get down to his books and keep at them until he was praised and held up as a model. One thing mastered, he would turn to another. It was thus

that he won to first place in his classes; thus, while still in the Corps, after once experiencing a certain embarrassment in French conversation, that he achieved the same mastery of French as he had of Russian; thus, when chess attracted him, that he attained a high degree of proficiency at that game.

Aside from his general mission in life, which consisted in serving his Tsar and his country, Kasatsky had always some immediate aim before him; and however trifling this aim might be, he would throw himself entirely into its pursuit, living only for its attainment, until finally it was reached. But no sooner was it reached than some new aim would rise before him to replace it. And it was this striving for distinction, and, to attain distinction, this pursuit of one aim after another, that formed the content of his life. Thus, on receiving his commission, he determined to attain the utmost perfection in knowledge of the service; and very soon became a model officer—though, again, with the one exception of his uncontrollable temper, which now, as before, led him into conduct evil in itself and harmful in its effect on his career. Then, one day, a turn of conversation made him conscious of the shortcomings of his educational back-

ground. He determined to overcome this deficiency; surrounded himself with books, and achieved his aim. Then he felt the desire to distinguish himself in the world of society; trained himself to perfection in ballroom dancing, and soon advanced so far as to receive invitations to every society ball, and even, at times, to more narrow gatherings. This, however, did not satisfy him. He was accustomed to first place, and in society he was far from that.

High society in those days consisted—as, I suppose, it consists always and everywhere—of four categories of people: 1) people who are wealthy and of the Court; 2) people who are not wealthy, but who by birth and training belong to those of the Court; 3) people of wealth who try to ingratiate themselves with those of the Court, and 4) people neither wealthy nor of the Court, but eager to ingratiate themselves both with those of wealth and with those of the Court. Kasatsky was not of the first category. He was well received among the last two categories. When entering into society, he had set himself the goal of a liaison with some woman of society—and, more quickly than he could have hoped, had attained this goal. But he very soon

perceived that the circles in which he moved were of the lower order; that there were higher circles, and that in these higher Court circles, though received, he remained an outsider. He was treated with courtesy, but in every word and action he sensed that there were those who belonged, and that he did not belong. And he wanted to belong. There were ways of achieving that. One way was a royal adjutancy—and that he was expecting. Another way was marriage with someone of this circle. And he decided to make such a marriage. He chose a beautiful girl, one of the Court; a girl who not only belonged to those circles into which he sought acceptance, but whose friendship was sought by people the most highly placed and the most securely established in those lofty circles: Countess Korotkova. It was not only ambition that made Kasatsky single out the Countess. She was most attractive, and he soon fell in love with her. At first she received him with marked coldness; but then, suddenly, all that changed. She grew softer, and her mother became particularly cordial.

Kasatsky proposed, and was accepted. He was surprised by the ease with which he had attained such felicity. There was something

that seemed strange, unusual, in the manner of both mother and daughter. But he was very much in love, and therefore blind; and so he did not know what almost everyone in town was whispering of: that his betrothed, a year past, had been mistress to Nikolai Pavlovich.

II

Two weeks before the day set for the wedding, Kasatsky was visiting his betrothed at her summer retreat in Tsarskoye Selo. It was May, and very warm. They wandered up and down the garden for a while, then sat down on a bench on one of the avenues, where tall limes afforded pleasant shade. Countess Mary, that day, in her white dress of India muslin, was particularly charming. She looked the personification of innocence and love, as she sat there, her head bowed, looking up now and again at the handsome giant who spoke to her so tenderly, so gently—fearful lest some word or gesture offend and sully her angelic purity. Kasatsky was one of those men of the forties—there are none of them left today—who, while for themselves admitting of sexual impurity and seeing no wrong in it, of their wives demanded ideal, celestial

purity; and, assuming such celestial purity in all girls of their social circle, treated these girls accordingly. There was much that was wrong in those views, much harm in the licence which men allowed themselves; but their attitude to women, so radically differing from the attitude of young men today, who look on any girl as on a female in search of a mate—that, I think, was a wholesome attitude. Finding themselves so idealized, girls tried really to be ideal, as well as they were able. Such, then, was Kasatsky's attitude towards women, such his conception of his betrothed. More in love than ever, that day, he felt not the slightest carnal impulse towards her, but, rather, rejoiced tenderly in her inaccessibility.

He rose and stood before her, leaning with both hands on his sabre.

"It is only now I have learned what happiness life can bring," he said. "And that I owe to you—to thee!"

Dissidently, he smiled at her. He was in the stage when the intimate "thee" did not yet come accustomedly; and, looking up to her as he did in the moral sense, it seemed a fearful thing to address this angel so familiarly.

"I have come to know myself, thanks to . . .

thee, to know that I am better than I thought," he went on.

"I have known that for a long time," she answered. "It was that that made me love you."

A nightingale began to sing nearby. The fresh foliage rustled in a sudden breath of wind.

He took her hand, and kissed it. Tears rose to his eyes. She understood: he was thanking her for saying that she loved him. He paced up and down for a while, without a word, then returned and sat down at her side.

"I wanted to tell you ... thee.... Ah, well, no matter. It was a selfish aim, at first, that brought me to thee. What I sought was a place in society. But then.... How insignificant all that became in comparison with thee, when I learned to know thee. Does that anger thee?"

She did not answer, but her hand touched his.

He understood. She was not angry.

"And now I hear thee say...." He paused, fearing to seem too bold. "Well, that I have made thee love me. But—forgive me. It is not unbelief. But there is something, too, that disturbs, disquiets thee. What is it?"

Yes, she thought: it must be now or never. He would be sure to find out, in any case. But now—now he would not leave her. Ah, but she could not bear it if he left her!

Lovingly, her eyes took in his tall, stalwart, impressive figure. She loved him now, more than she had the Emperor. Were it not for the royal prerogative, she could not have preferred the Emperor to him.

"Listen, then. I cannot lie to you. I must tell you the whole truth. You ask—what is it? It is this: I have loved before."

She laid her hand on his, in timid pleading. He did not speak.

"Shall I tell you who it was? It was he, yes, His Majesty."

"We all love His Majesty. And while you were at school, I suppose...."

"No. I was out of school. It was infatuation, but it is over now. But I must tell you...."

"Well, but what of that?"

"It wasn't simply...."

Her hands flew up, hiding her face.

"What! Do you mean you gave yourself to him?"

She did not answer.

"Do you mean you were his mistress?"

She did not answer.

He sprang to his feet and stood facing her, pale as death. His lips were quivering. Suddenly, he recalled how affectionately Nikolai Pavlovich had congratulated him on his engagement, on meeting him one day on the Nevsky.

"Dear God! What have I done!" she cried.

"Don't touch me! Don't you touch me! Ah, how you've wounded me!"

He turned and strode to the house. In the hall, he met her mother.

"Why, what's the matter, Prince? I thought...."

But, seeing the look in his face, she stopped short. He had flushed violently.

"You knew!" he shouted at her. "You meant to use me as a shield! If you were a man...."

His great fist flew up. He turned sharply, and ran out of the house.

Had her former lover been anyone else, he would have killed him. But it was his adored sovereign.

The next day he applied for leave, and at the same time submitted his resignation. To avoid seeing anyone, he let it be understood that he was ill. Soon he left for the country.

He spent the summer on his estate, arranging his affairs. When the summer ended, in-

stead of returning to St. Petersburg, he left for a monastery, to become a monk.

His mother wrote him there, trying to dissuade him from so final a decision. He replied to her that God's call must be set before all other considerations, and that this call had come to him. Only Varvara, his sister, proud and ambitious as he was himself, understood and sympathized.

As she saw it, he had chosen monkhood in order to set himself above those people who had wished him to understand that they stood above him. And she was right. In entering monkhood, he demonstrated his contempt for all those things that seemed to others so important—that to him also, in his army days, had seemed important; he raised himself to new heights, from which he could look down upon the people he once had envied. But it was not only by this feeling, as Varvara thought, that he was guided. Mingling with his pride, with his need always to be first, was another motive, at which Varvara did not guess—a truly religious urge. His disillusionment in Mary (his betrothed), whom he had imagined such a saint, his feeling of outrage was so cruel that he sank into despair; and

despair led him—whither? To God, to the faith of his childhood, which had never lost its hold upon him.

III

Kasatsky entered the monastery on the festival of *Pokrov*.

The Superior at this monastery was a nobleman, a scholar and man of letters, and, too, a *starets*—one of a succession of monks, deriving from Walachia, distinguished by unquestioning obedience to the will of a chosen leader and teacher. The Superior was a disciple of the famed *starets* Amvrosi—disciple of Makari, disciple of the *starets* Leonid, disciple of Paisi Velichkovsky. Kasatsky acknowledged him as his own *starets*, or teacher.

Apart from the feeling of superiority over others which his entry into the monastery gave him, Kasatsky derived satisfaction here—as he had always, in everything he did—in the pursuit of the utmost perfection, inner as well as outer, in his new calling. Just as, in his regiment, he had been not merely an irreproachable officer, but one who did more than was required of him, who carried duty beyond what was officially laid down—so now, as a monk, he also sought

perfection, striving to be industrious, abstemious, meek, gentle, pure—not only in deed, but in thought—and obedient. This last quality, or virtue, in particular, made his life easier than it might otherwise have been. Many of the demands made upon him by the life of a monk in a much-visited monastery were unpleasant to him, led him into temptation; but this was cured by obedience, by the understanding: it is not for me to reason; what I must do is to carry out the duties laid upon me, whatever they may be—watching beside the sacred relics, or singing in the choir, or keeping accounts for the monastery hostel. All possibility of doubt in any sphere was eliminated, too, by this same virtue of obedience to the *starets*. Were it not for this obedience, he would have been oppressed by the length and monotony of the church services, by the restless comings and goings of visitors, by the unpleasant traits of the monastic brotherhood; but obedience made of all this not merely something to be gladly endured, but a new comfort and support in life: “I do not know why it should be needful to hear one and the same prayers several times a day; but I know that it is needful. And, knowing that it is needful, I find happy-

ness in it." Just as material food is essential for the support of life, the *starets* told him, so is spiritual food, church prayer, essential to spiritual life. This he believed; and, in truth, the church service for which he sometimes found it so difficult to get up of a morning brought him undeniable peace and happiness. There was happiness in the feeling of submission, in the unquestioning acceptance of the things that he must do—all laid down for him by the *starets*. The point of life lay not only in an ever greater curbing of his own will, an ever greater submission and humility, but, further, in the attainment of all the Christian virtues. These, at first, seemed to him easily achieved. He had made over his entire estate to his sister, and felt no regrets for it. He was not lazy. Humility in relations with his inferiors was not only easy, but a source of joy. Even the sins of the flesh, both greed and lust, were easily conquered. Against these sins, the *starets* had warned him particularly; but Kasatsky was free of them, and rejoiced in his freedom.

Only one thing tormented him: the memory of his betrothed. And not only the memory, but the vivid realization of what might have been. Involuntarily, he would recall another

of the sovereign's former loves, who had afterwards married and become a model wife and mother. Her husband had been appointed to an important post; had attained power and esteem, and with them a good and repentant wife.

In Kasatsky's better moments, these thoughts were not disturbing. Coming to mind at his better moments, they made him but rejoice in his escape from temptation. But there were other moments, when all that now filled his life seemed suddenly to dim and fade; when he lost, not exactly his faith in this new content of his life, but rather his vision of it, his ability to summon it up within him. And then he would be seized with memories and, to his horror, with repentance for his adoption of the religious life.

Escape, again, lay in obedience: in the work laid down for him, and the prayers that filled every hour of the day. He would pray as always, and prostrate himself in humble obeisance. He would pray, indeed, more than always; but his prayer at such times was purely physical. There was no soul in it. This would drag on for a day, perhaps two, and then it would pass. But that day, or two days—they were a time of horror, when he

felt himself in someone's power: not his own power, nor God's, but another's. And all that he could do, all that he did, at such times, was what the *starets* counselled: to hold on, undertake nothing, and wait. Altogether, throughout this period, Kasatsky's life was regulated not by his own will, but by the will of the *starets*; and this complete submission was a source of spiritual tranquillity.

Kasatsky lived in this way, at his first monastery, for seven years. At the end of the third year he was ordained as a hieromonach¹ and given the name of Sergius. This was an event of great moment in his inner life. Participation in the communion had always brought him great consolation and spiritual uplift; and now, on those occasions when he himself was the celebrant, the ceremony of the oblation filled his soul with throbbing rapture. In time, however, this emotion began to lose its intensity; and when, one day, he had to celebrate the liturgy in that state of depression which came upon him now and again, he realized that this, too, would pass. And, truly, the feeling of rapture weakened; but the habit remained.

¹ Hieromonach—a monk who is also a priest.—Tr.

On the whole, in the seventh year of his life at the monastery, Sergius began to feel a certain boredom. He had mastered all there was for him to learn and master here. There was nothing more to occupy him.

But, on the other hand, the state of lethargy into which he had begun to fall was growing steadily deeper. The news of his mother's death, and then of Countess Mary's marriage to another, coming in this period, did not move him. All his interest, all his faculties were concentrated on his inner life.

In the fourth year after his ordainment the bishop was particularly cordial to him, and the *starets* told him that, should he be named for some higher office, he need not refuse. And then he felt a rising ambition, that monastic ambition that was so abhorrent to him in other monks. He was appointed to a monastery situated near the capital. He would have liked to refuse, but the *starets* told him to accept. And so he accepted the appointment, took his leave of the *starets*, and left for his new monastery.

This move to the vicinity of the capital was an important development in Sergius' life. Temptation of every kind surrounded him and all his energy went into resistance.

At his first monastery Sergius had suffered little from the temptation of sex. Here, however, this temptation arose with fearful power. It even assumed definite shape. A certain lady, of unsavoury reputation, began to seek Sergius' attention. She spoke to him, and asked him to visit her. He sternly refused. But he was appalled by the sharp definition of his desire. He was so alarmed that he wrote to the *starets* about it. More, to curb himself, he called the young lay brother who attended him and, humbling his pride, confessed his weakness to him, asking that he keep watch and let him go nowhere but to services and about his monastic duties.

Another sore temptation lay in the extreme dislike that Sergius conceived for the Superior of his new monastery, a shrewd, worldly, and ambitious man. Strive as he would, he could not conquer this antipathy. He endured—but in the depths of his soul continued to condemn. And this sinful feeling broke out of control.

It happened in the second year of his stay at the new monastery. And this is how it came about. It was *Pokrov*, and vespers were being sung in the big monastery church. There were many visitors. The Superior himself conducted

the service. Father Sergius stood in his usual place, absorbed in prayer, or rather, in that state of inner struggle which always came upon him during services, particularly in the big church, when he was not officiating. The cause of this struggle lay in the irritation that the visitors caused him—the fine gentlefolk, and particularly the ladies. He tried not to notice them, not to see what went on in the church: the way a soldier ushered in the gentry, jostling the people to make way for them; the way the ladies pointed out the monks to one another—and, often, it was he they pointed out, or another of the monks known for his handsome face. He tried to create blinders for himself, to keep his attention from straying; to see nothing but the gleam of the candles before the iconostasis, the icons, and the monks engaged in the service; to hear nothing but the words of prayer, sung or said; to allow himself no feeling other than that sense of duty fulfilment which came to him at every hearing and every repetition of the prayers heard so many times before.

He was standing thus, bowing down or crossing himself where the service required, engaged in his struggle between cold condemnation and a deliberately induced deaden-

ing of thought and feeling, when Father Nikodim, the sacristan, came up to him. This Nikodim was another source of sore temptation to Father Sergius, who could not help but condemn his flattering, ingratiating manner towards the Superior. With a bow that bent him almost double, Father Nikodim delivered his message: the Superior desired Father Sergius to join him in the sanctuary. Sergius adjusted his habit, covered his head, and moved slowly forward, trying not to disturb the people.

"*Lise, regardez à droite, c'est lui,*"¹ a woman's voice exclaimed.

"*Où, où? Il n'est pas tellement beau.*"²

They were speaking of him, he knew. And, hearing this talk, he repeated over and over to himself, as always when his spirit was so tried, "Lead us not into temptation." With bowed head and lowered eyes, he passed the ambo, skirted the surpliced precentors, who were moving past the iconostasis, and went in at the northern doors. Entering the sanctuary, he crossed himself and bowed to the ground, as the custom was, before the icon; and only then raised his head and glanced

¹ "Look, Liza! Over to the right. It's he."

² "Where? Where? He's not so very handsome."

at the Superior and at the glittering figure beside him, which he had already noticed out of the corner of his eye as he came in.

The Superior stood by the wall, his short, plump arms stretched over his fat belly, his fingers toying with the gold embroidery of his vestments. He was engaged in smiling conversation with a man in the uniform of a Staff general, adorned with gold braiding and shoulder knots which Father Sergius' practised military eye quickly assessed. This general had been Prince Kasatsky's regimental commander. Now, it seemed, he was a personage of some importance; and the Superior—as Father Sergius immediately noted—knew of this, and so rejoiced in it that his fat red face, under his bald crown, simply beamed with pleasure. This offended and angered Father Sergius, the more so that, as he now learned, the Superior had sent for him for no other purpose than to satisfy the general's curiosity—his desire to have a look at a one-time colleague, as he put it.

"Very glad to see you in angelic guise," the general said, holding out his hand. "You haven't forgotten an old comrade, I hope."

The Superior's face, red and smiling in the frame of his grey beard, beaming approval, as

it were, of the general's words; the general's face, so carefully groomed, his complacent smile, the odour of wine that issued from his mouth and of cigars from his whiskers—all this was too much for Father Sergius' self-control. He bowed once more before the Superior, and said:

"Your Reverence was pleased to send for me."

And, as he paused, his face—his very pose—inquired, "What for?"

"Why, yes, to see the General," the Superior said.

Father Sergius turned pale.

"Your Reverence," he said, with trembling lips, "I renounced the world in order to escape temptation. Why, then, do you subject me to temptation—here, in God's church, in the hour of prayer?"

"Go, then. Go," the Superior exclaimed, flushed and frowning.

The next day Father Sergius asked pardon of the Superior and of the brotherhood for his overweening; but nonetheless, after a night spent in prayer, decided that he must leave this monastery. Of this he wrote to the *starets*, imploring permission to return to the monastery at which the *starets* was Superior.

He felt his weakness, he wrote, and his inability to fight down temptation without the help of the *starets*; and he confessed to his sinful pride. The next post brought a reply from the *starets*, who wrote to him that the cause of all his trouble lay in his pride. His wrathful outburst, the *starets* explained, had come about because it was not for God that he had humbled himself, rejecting honours and advancement in the church—not for God, but to satisfy his own pride, to be able to tell himself how virtuous he was, seeking nothing for self. That was why he had not been able to endure the Superior's conduct. Because he felt that he had given up everything for God, and now he was being put on display, like some strange beast.

“If it were for God you had given up advancement, you would have let it pass. Worldly pride is still alive in you. I have thought about you, my son, and I have prayed, and this is what God put into my mind for you: live on as before, and submit. And as I was thinking thus, the news came to me that the saintly recluse Illarion lies dead in his hermitage, where he lived for eighteen years. The Tambino Superior inquires whether there is no brother who would wish to live there.

And there lay your letter before me. Go to Father Paisi, at Tambino monastery. I will write to him. Ask to occupy Illarion's cell. Not that you can fill Illarion's place; but you are in need of seclusion to subdue your pride. May the blessing of God go with you."

Sergius obeyed the *starets*. He showed the letter to his Superior and, with his permission, having given up his cell and all his belongings to the monastery, set out for the Tambino hermitage.

The Superior there, an excellent manager, of the merchant class, received Sergius with quiet dignity and lodged him in Illarion's cell—at first with a lay brother to attend him, but later, at Sergius' wish, in complete solitude. The cell was a cave hollowed out in the rock. Illarion now lay buried here. There was an inner chamber, in which Illarion was buried, and an outer one, furnished with a small table and a shelf for books and icons and, in a niche at the side, a mattress of straw. The door to the cave could be locked. Outside it there was a shelf, on which, once a day, a monk sent from the monastery would lay a supply of food.

And Father Sergius became a hermit.

IV

At Shrovetide in the sixth year of Sergius' seclusion, a merry company of wealthy men and women, gathered in the neighbouring town for the season's pancakes and wine, called for sleighs and went out driving. Two of the company were lawyers, one a wealthy landowner, and one an officer. The other four were women: the officer's wife, the landowner's wife and unmarried sister, and, for the fourth, a divorcée, wealthy and beautiful, known for her odd ways and queer escapades, which kept the whole town gaping and gossiping.

It was a splendid evening, and the road was smooth and firm. Some ten versts out of town they drew up to confer: forward, or back?

"Where does this road go?" Makovkina asked—the divorced beauty.

"To Tambino," the lawyer who was seeking her favour replied. "That's another twelve versts."

"And from Tambino—where to?"

"Towards L., past the monastery."

"The one where Father Sergius lives?"

"That's right."

"Kasatsky? The handsome hermit?"

"That's right."

"Mesdames! Gentlemen! Let's visit this Kasatsky. We can rest and eat at Tambino."

"But we can't make it there and back tonight."

"No matter. We can stay the night with Kasatsky."

"Well—there's a hostel at the monastery, not bad at all. I lived there when I was working on the Makhin case."

"Not for me. I'll stay the night with Kasatsky."

"Umm. Even for one omnipotent as you, that's impossible."

"Impossible? Will you bet on it?"

"Well and good. If you stay the night with him—ask what you please of me!"

"*A discréteion?*"¹

"If the same holds for you."

"Of course. Let's be going!"

They gave the drivers wine, and for themselves got out a hamper filled with pasties, wine, and sweets. The ladies bundled up in their white fur cloaks. The drivers argued among themselves a bit as to who was to lead;

¹ "Whatever I please?"

and then one of them, a young fellow poised dashingly sidewise on his seat, swung his long whip and shouted at the horses. And they were off, with a jingling of bells and a squealing of runners.

The sleigh swayed and vibrated. The willing horses ran briskly and smoothly, their bound-up tails bobbing over the ornamented breeching; and the firm, even road slipped rapidly back, back and away. The dashing driver seemed to be playing with the reins. From the forward seat, the lawyer and the officer bombarded Makovkina and her neighbour with idle chatter. But Makovkina sat motionless, wrapped close in her white cloak, thinking her own thoughts: "Always the same—everything always the same, and always horrid. Shiny red faces, smelling of wine and tobacco. Always the same talk, always the same thoughts, and always the same filth behind it all. And they're all so satisfied, so convinced that that's the only way to live. And they can go on that way to the day they die. I can't. I'm sick of it all. What I need is something that would turn it all over, shake it all up. Like—well, say, like those people in Saratov, or wherever it was, that set out for somewhere, and froze to death. What

would these people do? How would they behave? Contemptibly, I suppose. Every man for himself. And me, too—I'd be just as contemptible. But at least I'm good to look at. They know that. What about that monk, I wonder? Has he really lost the taste for it? No—it can't be! That's the one thing they really want. Like that cadet, last autumn. And wasn't he a silly fool!"

"Ivan Nikolayevich," she said aloud.

"At your service!"

"How old is he?"

"Who?"

"Kasatsky."

"Past forty, I should say."

"He receives all comers, I've heard."

"All comers, but not at all times."

"Tuck the rug in around my feet. Not that way. How clumsy you are! There—tighter, tighter. That's right. And there's no need to squeeze my legs."

At length they reached the wood in which the cell was situated.

She got out of the sleigh, and told the others to drive on. They tried to dissuade her from her purpose, but that only angered her, and she demanded again that they drive on. Then

they left, and she turned down the path alone, in her white fur cloak. The lawyer got out and stayed to watch.

V

It was the sixth year of Father Sergius' seclusion. He was forty-nine years old. And life was hard. Not in its rigours of fasting and prayer—these were not hard; but in an inner struggle such as he had never foreseen. The causes of struggle were two: doubt, and lust. And always they came together. He took them for two distinct foes; but actually, both were one. So soon as doubt was conquered, lust, too, gave way. But he thought them separate demons, and fought them separately.

"Oh, Lord, my God," his thoughts ran, "why dost Thou deny me faith? Lust—that I can understand. Lust tormented St. Anthony, yes, and others, too. But faith! They had faith, whereas for me there are moments, hours, days when faith is not. Why should the world exist, with all its beauty, if it is sinful and must be renounced? What for hast Thou created this temptation? Temptation? But is it not temptation that prompts me to abandon the joys of the world, seeking to prepare a

place for myself where—perhaps—there is nothing at all?"

But even as this thought passed through his mind he shrank from it in horror, in violent self-loathing.

"Beast! Beast!" he railed at himself. "And I make myself out a saint!"

And he turned to prayer. But as he began to pray he suddenly had a vivid picture of himself as he had been at the monastery, in flowing habit—a majestic figure. And he shook his head, thinking, "No. That's not real. That's sham. But—I can fool others with it, perhaps, only not myself, and not God. No, I'm not majestic. I'm ludicrous, pitiful." And he threw back the skirts of his cassock and looked down at his pitiful drawered legs. And smiled.

And then he let his cassock drop into place, and began to pray, crossing himself and bowing himself down. In his prayers came the line, "Will this bed, then, be my bier?"—and it was as though some demon whispered to him, "A lone bed is a bier in itself. Lies, lies!" And memory pictured for him the shoulders of the widow with whom he had sinned. He shook off these thoughts and continued his prayers. When he had recited the Rules, he

took up his Testament and opened it at random. It opened on a passage which he knew by heart, for he had often and often repeated it: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." He dragged back all the doubts arising in his mind. As one sets up a body in unstable equilibrium, so he set up his faith once more on its wavering foundation—and drew back cautiously, lest he jolt and upset it. Again his blinders came into place, and he was at peace. He prayed his childhood prayer—"Lord, take, take me!"—and he was not merely eased, but filled with joyful emotion. He crossed himself, and lay down on his narrow bench, bedded with a thin straw mattress, with a light summer cassock under his head for pillow. And he fell asleep. It was a light sleep, and through it he seemed to hear the jingle of sleigh bells—whether dream or reality, he did not know. But then a knock came at his door, waking him thoroughly. He sat up, doubting his own ears. But the knock was repeated. Yes, it was here, at his door. And a woman's voice, calling.

Dear God! Could it be true, what he had read in the lives of the saints—that the Devil sometimes took the shape of a woman? Yes,

it was a woman's voice. And so soft, and timid, and charming! Avaunt!

He spat.

But no, it must have been his imagination.

He went to the little lectern in the corner, and there dropped to his knees in a smooth, accustomed movement in which—in the actual physical movement—he had grown to find comfort and pleasure. He bowed down, so that his hair fell over his face, and pressed his forehead—higher now than it once had been, with advancing baldness—to the damp, cold matting. (There was a draught along the floor.)

... The psalm he was reciting was one that, old Father Pimen had told him, helped to conquer obsession. He rose, his sinewy legs easily swinging up his light, emaciated frame, and was about to continue the psalm—but instead, involuntarily, strained to hear that voice. He wanted to hear it. All was still. Nothing but the usual drip of melting snow from the roof into the tub set out to catch it. The world outdoors lay cloaked in damp, cold fog. All was still, very still. Then, suddenly, there was a rustling at the window and, clear and distinct, a voice—that same voice, soft and timid; a

voice that could belong to none but an attractive woman.

"Let me in," it said. "In Christ's name."

He felt the blood rush to his heart, and pause there in its flow. He could not catch his breath.

"May the Lord rise, and his enemies be confounded...."

"Why, I'm no evil spirit!"—and he could tell by the voice that the lips were smiling. "I'm no evil spirit. I'm just a sinful woman that has lost her way. Literally, not the other way." She laughed. "And I'm half frozen, and begging you for shelter."

He pressed his face to the window-pane. All he could see was the reflection of his icon lamp in the glass. Then he shielded his eyes with his hands, and stared out again. Foggy darkness. A tree. And—just to the right. There. A woman, in a cloak of shaggy white fur and a little hat. With such a charming, charming face, kindly, and frightened—leaning towards him, only an inch or two away. Their eyes met, and they knew one another. Not that they had ever met before—no, they had never met; but in this glance that they exchanged they felt (he, particularly) that they knew, understood one another. There

could be no thought, after this glance, of evil spirits. No, she was a woman—simple, kindly, charming, timid.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he asked.

"Ah, do open up," she returned, wilfully, imperiously. "I'm half frozen. I told you—I've lost my way."

"But I'm a monk. A hermit."

"Well, open up, then. Or do you want me to freeze to death outside your window, while you stand there praying?"

"But how...."

"Ah, I won't eat you. Let me in, in God's name. I'm so cold!"

Now she, in turn, was beginning to be frightened. There was a hint of tears in her voice.

He moved away from the window, and turned to glance at the icon of Christ, in his crown of thorns. "Help me, Lord. Help me, Lord," he murmured, crossing himself and bowing down. Then he went out to the entry-way, and groped in the darkness until he found the hook fastening the outer door. He could hear footsteps outside. She was coming away from the window, towards the door. "Oh!"—she cried suddenly. She must have

stepped into the puddle that had collected by the threshold. His hands were shaking, and the hook was tight. He could not undo it.

"Open up, do! Why do you keep me so? I'm wet through, and freezing. You think of nothing but your soul, and I stand here freezing."

He pulled at the door. The hook loosened, and he undid it. Throwing the door open, he pushed it harder than he had meant to, and it struck against her.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he said, swept suddenly back into the old, accustomed courtesies.

She smiled at the sound of that "pardon." No, he was not so very formidable, after all.

"No need, no need," she returned, as she passed him in the doorway. "I'm the one that ought to be begging pardon. I'd never have had the effrontery, only—such a dreadful situation!"

"Come in," he said, moving aside to let her by.

The delicate fragrance of perfume, so long forgotten, assailed his nostrils. She passed through the entry into the room. He shut the outer door, but did not hook it; crossed the entry, and went into the room.

"Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner," he kept praying, not only in his heart, but with involuntary movements of his lips.

"Make yourself comfortable," he said.

She stood, dripping, in the middle of the room, looking at him curiously, with laughter in her eyes.

"You must forgive me for breaking in on your solitude. But you see what a predicament I'm in. It all came about because, you see, we were out driving, and I wagered I'd walk back to town alone, all the way from Vorobyovka. But I lost my way, and if I hadn't stumbled on your cell here...."

She broke off. His face so disconcerted her that she could not go on lying. She had expected something very different. He was not so handsome as she had imagined him, but to her he seemed very beautiful, with his crisp, greying hair and beard, his straight, fine-cut nose, and his dark eyes—like burning coals, when he looked straight at her.

He saw that she was lying.

"Yes, I see," he said. He glanced at her, then dropped his eyes again. "I'll leave you now. Make yourself at home."

He took down the lamp and lit a candle at it, bowed to her, and went out into the little back room. Soon, through the partition, she heard him moving something heavy.

"Blocking the door against me, probably," she thought, and smiled.

She threw off her shaggy cloak, and removed her hat—it had caught in her hair—and her knitted shawl. She had not been cold at all when she spoke to him at the window, and had only complained to make him let her in. But as she came up to the door she had stumbled into a puddle, and now her left foot was wet over the ankle, and her shoe and overshoe full of water. She sat down on his bed—a narrow bench, with nothing to cover it but a thin mattress of straw—to take off her shoes. This cell in which she found herself—she thought it charming. It was a narrowish little room, some three arshins by four, sparkling with cleanliness. There was no furniture but the bench on which she sat, and over it a shelf of books; yes, and a little lectern in the corner. By the door, on nails driven into the wall, hung a cassock and a fur-lined coat. Over the lectern, an icon of Christ, crowned with thorns, with an icon lamp burning before it. There was a strange

odour in the room, of lamp oil, and sweat, and soil. She thought it all very pleasant. Even the smells.

Her wet feet were uncomfortable, particularly the left, and she began hastily to free them, smiling all the time with pleasure—not so much at the winning of her wager as at the disturbance which, she well knew, she had brought into the soul of this charming, this striking, this strange and attractive male. True, he had made no response. But what of that?

“Father Sergius! Father Sengius! That’s your name, isn’t it?”

“What do you wish?”—came his low voice in reply.

“Do please forgive me for breaking in on your seclusion. I couldn’t help myself, truly I couldn’t. I’d have been taken ill. Even now, I may. I’m soaking wet, and my feet are cold as ice.”

“I’m sorry,” the low voice answered. “But there’s nothing I can do.”

“I’d never have dared disturb you, if I could have helped it. I’ll only stay until the light.”

He did not answer. And she could hear him whispering—praying, she supposed.

“You won’t be coming out here, will you?”

she asked, smiling. "Because, you see, I must undress, to dry my things."

He did not answer. His even voice came through to her, murmuring in prayer.

"Yes, there's a man, a real man," she thought, as she tugged at her water-filled overshoe.

She tugged and tugged, but the overshoe would not come off. That amused her, and she broke into a laugh, barely audible. But, knowing that he heard her laughter, and that her laughter might affect him precisely in the manner she desired, she laughed more loudly. And, truly, her laughter—merry, unforced, kindly—affected him, and precisely in the manner she desired.

"Yes," she thought, "one could love a man like that. Those eyes. And his face, so simple, noble, yes, and—mumble what prayers he will—yes, passionate! We women can't be fooled. Why, when he pressed his face to the window, and caught sight of me—he knew. He realized. It flashed then, deep in his eyes, and it made its mark. He knew love for me, and desire. Yes, and desire."

Her shoes and overshoes were off at last, and she could get at her stockings. To remove them, those long, gartered stockings,

she must lift her skirts. She felt ashamed, and called:

"Don't come out."

But no answer came from the other room. The monotonous murmur continued, and there was a sound of movement.

"Prostrating himself in prayer," she thought to herself. "But it won't do him much good. He's thinking of me. Just as I am of him. Thinking, with just the same feeling, of these feet of mine"—and, her wet stockings removed, she stamped her bare feet against the straw mattress, then drew them under her for warmth. She sat thus awhile, hugging her knees and staring dreamily at the wall. And her thoughts went on: "Why, we're in the wilderness. Such a hush! No one would ever know."

She got up and took her stockings to the stove, and hung them up on the damper. It was a peculiar damper, not the sort that she was used to. She fingered it idly, then turned back across the room, her bare feet treading lightly on the matting, and got up on the bench again. There was not a sound, now, in the other room. She glanced at the tiny watch that hung on a ribbon around her neck.

It was two o'clock. The sleighs were to return at about three. Only an hour left.

Was she to spend that hour all alone? Ridiculous! She would not. She would call him to her at once.

"Father Sergius! Father Sergius! Sergei Dmitriyevich! Prince Kasatsky!"

Not a sound in the other room.

"How can you be so cruel? I'd never call you. Never, if I weren't in need. I'm ill. I don't know what's wrong with me," she cried, her voice full of suffering. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"—and she threw herself down on the bench. And, strange as it might seem, she truly felt that she was ill, so ill. Her whole body ached, and she was trembling as in a fever.

"Do come and help me! I don't know what's the matter. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

She unhooked her dress, exposing her bosom, and threw out her arms, bare to the elbow.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

He had been standing in the back room, all this time, praying. He had recited all the evening prayers, and now stood motionless, his eyes focused on the tip of his nose, praying inwardly—repeating in his spirit, "Lord

Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me."

But he had heard everything—had heard the rustle of silk as she lifted her dress, and the patter of her bare feet on the matting, and the sound that her hands made, rubbing her wet legs. He felt his weakness, felt that at any moment he might be lost; and therefore he prayed incessantly. He experienced something of what must have been felt by that fairy-tale hero who could attain his goal only if he advanced with eyes ahead, never for an instant glancing back. Like that hero, he sensed—he knew—that danger, perdition hung over and around him, and that the only escape lay in refraining from so much as a glance at it. But, all at once, he was seized with the desire to glance at it. And just at that moment she called:

"You're simply inhuman. I might be dying."

Yes, he would go to her—go as that holy father had who laid one hand on the fornicatress and thrust the other into a brazier. But he had no brazier. He looked about the room. The lamp. He held a finger over the flame, and, frowning, set himself to endure. For quite some time he seemed to feel noth-

ing at all; but suddenly—whether it hurt, and how badly it hurt, he did not really know—he grimaced disgustedly and jerked his hand away. No, that he could not do.

"In God's name! Oh, come and help me! Oh, but I'm dying!"

Must he, then, be lost? He would not. No.

"I'll be with you in a moment," he said, opening his door; and passed through the room, without a glance at her, into the entry. It was here that he always chopped his fire-wood. Groping, he found the chopping block, and then the hatchet, propped against the wall.

"In a moment," he said again; and, grasping the hatchet in his right hand, laid the index finger of his left hand on the block. He swung the hatchet and brought it down on his finger, below the second joint. The finger was severed more easily than wood of the same thickness. It flew up, turned over in the air, and fell, first to the edge of the block, and then to the floor.

He heard it strike the floor. He had not yet felt any pain. But just as he began to wonder that there was no pain, the pain came, sharp and burning, and on his fingers he felt the warm trickle of blood. Quickly, he wrapped

the bleeding stump in the folds of his cassock and pressed it against his side. Then he went into the room and, pausing opposite the woman, asked quietly, with lowered eyes:

"What did you wish?"

She saw his blanched face, and the tremor in his left cheek. And, suddenly, she was ashamed. She jumped up and got her cloak, and wrapped it close around her.

"Why, I was in pain.... I've caught a chill.... I.... Father Sergius.... I...."

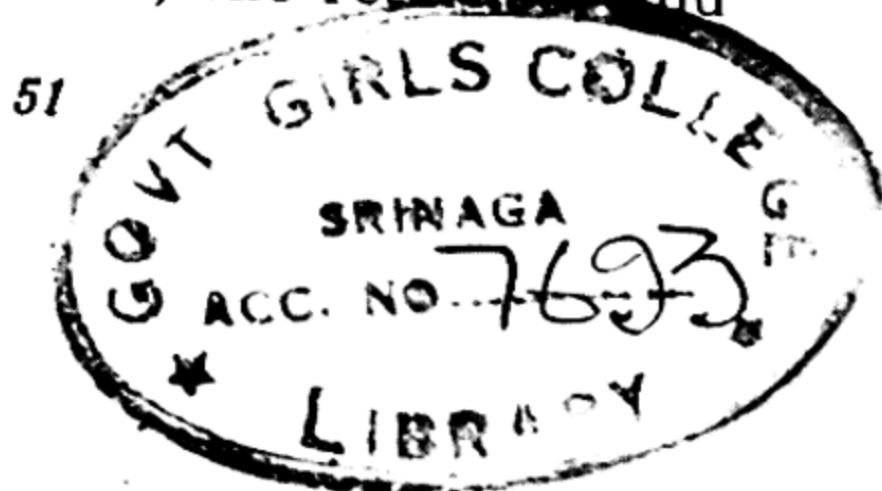
He looked up, his eyes beaming with gentle rejoicing, and said:

"What for, dear sister, would you have doomed your immortal soul? Temptation must come into this world, but woe to those through whom temptation comes.... Pray to God, that he may forgive us."

She stood listening, watching his face as he spoke. And suddenly she heard a sound of something dripping. She looked down, and saw the blood running from his hand down the folds of his cassock.

"What have you done to your hand?"

She recalled the sound she had heard. Seizing the lamp, she ran out into the entry. There, on the floor, she saw the bloodstained finger. Paler even than he, she returned, and



would have spoken to him; but he slipped quietly out into the back room, and fastened the door behind him.

"Forgive me," she said. "What can I do to expiate my sin?"

"Go."

"Let me bind up your finger."

"Go."

Hastily, in silence, she dressed. When she was ready, she sat down, wrapped in her cloak, to wait. Soon the sleigh bells sounded.

"Father Sergius. Forgive me."

"Go. God will forgive."

"Father Sergius. I'll change my ways. Don't abandon me."

"Go."

"Forgive me, and give me your blessing."

"In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost," came the voice from the other room. "Go."

Sobbing, she left the cell. The lawyer appeared, advancing to meet her.

"Well, I've lost, I see, worse luck! Which seat will you take?"

"It doesn't matter."

She got into the sleigh, and said not a word all through the drive to town.

A year later, she took simple vows and settled down to a strict religious life at a nunnery, guided by the hermit Arseni, who wrote her letters now and again.

VI

Father Sergius lived in his hermitage seven more years.

At the beginning, he had used much of what was brought him: milk, sugar, tea, white bread, clothing, and firewood. But as time passed his way of life grew more and more austere. He gave up all habits of indulgence, reducing himself, in the end, to coarse black bread, a portion of which he accepted once a week. All else that was brought him, he gave away to the poor.

He spent his days in prayer in his cell, and in the reception of his visitors, who grew more and more numerous. He left his cell only for church—two or three times a year—or to fetch wood or water, when needed.

After five years of this life came the divorcée's nocturnal visit, and the change it brought about in her, and her retirement into a nunnery. All this became known, and Father Sergius' fame began to spread. Visitors came

in ever greater numbers. Monks were settled near the cell, and a church and a hostel built. Father Sergius' fame—as always, exaggerated—spread ever further. People began to flock to him from distant places. The sick and the suffering were brought to him, for it was said that he could heal them.

His first healing was performed in the eighth year of his life as a hermit. It was the healing of a boy of fourteen, whose mother brought him to the hermitage and demanded that Father Sergius lay his hand upon him. It had never occurred to Father Sergius that he might be able to heal the sick. Such a thought would have seemed to him sinful presumption. But the mother of this boy pleaded, and grovelled before him, and would not desist. He helped others, she said; why, then, would he not heal her son? In Christ's name, she implored him. To Father Sergius' explanation that only God could heal, she replied that she asked him only to lay his hand upon her son and pray. Father Sergius refused, and retired into his cell. But when he went out to fetch water next day (it was autumn, and the nights were cold) he found this same woman waiting for him, with her son, a thin, pale boy of fourteen; and again she poured

forth her entreaties. Father Sergius recalled the parable of the unrighteous judge; and while until that moment he had never questioned but that he must deny the woman's plea, he now felt less certain. With this uncertainty, he began to pray, and prayed until decision took shape within him. His decision was, that he must do as the woman asked; that her faith might save her child; and that he, Father Sergius, in this case, would be no more than God's unworthy instrument.

And Father Sergius came out of his cell once more, and went to the woman, and did her will. He laid his hand on the boy's head, and prayed.

They left, and a month later the boy's health returned. And the news spread far and wide of the miraculous healing power of *starets* Sergius, as people now called him. From that time forth, not a week passed but that the sick came to Father Sergius. And, having yielded to the pleas of one, he could not refuse the pleas of others. He laid his hand upon them, and prayed; and many were healed; and his renown spread ever further.

Thus did the years pass: nine in monasteries, and thirteen in this hermitage. Father Sergius was a venerable figure now. His

beard was long and grey, but his hair, though it had thinned, remained black and crisp as always.

VII

For some weeks, Father Sergius' mind had been occupied with the one persistent thought: was he doing right in submitting to this position in which he found himself, not so much by his own will as by that of the Archimandrite and the Superior? It had all begun with the healing of that fourteen-year-old boy. Since that time Sergius had felt with every passing month, week, day a gradual breaking-down of his inner life, and the growth, in its place, of a life purely external. It was as though he were being turned inside out.

He served, he realized, as a means of attracting visitors and donations to the monastery; and for that reason the monastery authorities sought so to order his way of life as to derive the greatest possible benefit from him. Thus, he was no longer permitted to labour physically. All that he might possibly need was supplied to him, and only one demand was made upon him: that he receive the people who came to him, and grant them his blessing. For his greater convenience, reg-

ular days were set for visitors. A reception room was arranged for men, and a railed-in place where he could not be thrown from his feet by the women crowding to see him—a place from which to pronounce his blessing. He could not but submit when it was argued that people needed him; that, in obedience to Christ's law of love, he had not the right to deny them in their need of him; that it would be cruel to withhold himself from them. But as he was drawn more and more into this way of life, he felt more and more that his inner world was being transformed into a world of externals; that the source of living water within him was going dry; that all he did was done, to a greater and greater degree, for man, and not for God.

Whether exhorting, or simply blessing; whether praying for the sick, or giving counsel to seekers of a right way in life, or receiving the gratitude of those whom he had helped by healing, as they said, or by edification—he could not but be pleased, could not but be interested in the results of his efforts, in the influence that he exerted over others. The thought came to him that he was like unto a burning torch; and the stronger this feeling became, the more deeply he sensed the weak-

ening, the dimming of God's light of truth burning within him. To what degree were his works done for God, and to what degree for man?—this question tormented him unceasingly; and never was he able, not so much to answer it, as to face the answer squarely. In the depths of his soul he knew that, in place of all his work for God, Satan had substituted work for man. He knew it by the way solitude now weighed on him, as violation of his solitude had weighed on him before. His visitors burdened and wearied him; yet in his heart he was glad of them, glad of the praises that rang around him.

There was a period when he made up his mind to leave, to escape. He even planned out all that he must do. He prepared peasant clothing—shirt and trousers, hat and coat. He needed them, he said, to give in charity. And he kept this clothing in his cell, and made his plans of how he would put it on, one day, and cut his hair short, and leave. He would go by train at first, three hundred versts or so, and then get off and go wandering about the countryside, from village to village. He questioned an old soldier who came to him, asking how he got on, and how he asked alms and shelter for the night. The soldier

told him how it was, and where it was easiest to find alms and shelter. And Father Sergius thought that he would do as this old soldier did. He actually got into his peasant clothes, one night, intending to go; but he did not know what was best: to go, or to stay. For some time he remained undecided. But then his indecision passed. He grew accustomed to his life, and submitted to Satan. And the peasant clothing remained no more than a reminder of his one-time thoughts and feelings.

With every day more and more people came to him, and less and less time remained for prayer and spiritual fortification. At times, in his better moments, the thought occurred to him that he had come to resemble a place where there once had been a spring.

"There was a spring, a gentle spring of living water, flowing softly through me and out of me. That was life in truth, when *she*"—Mother Agnia, now. It was always with rapture that he recalled that night, and her—"when *she* came to tempt me. She partook of that pure water. But now, before the water can collect, the thirsty rush to drink, crowding, jostling one another. And they have

trampled out the spring, and only mud remains."

Thus did he think in his rare better moments. But his more habitual state was one of fatigue, and of self-admiration evoked by this fatigue.

It was spring, the eve of the feast of *Prepoloveniye*, and Father Sergius was conducting vespers in his cave church. There were some twenty people present—all that the cave could hold; gentlefolk and merchants, people of wealth. Father Sergius admitted all comers, but they were filtered out by the monk in attendance on him and the assistant sent daily from the monastery. Outside, some eighty pilgrims, chiefly women, crowded around the door, waiting for Father Sergius to appear and give them his blessing.

The service went on. As, singing praise, Father Sergius approached the grave of his predecessor, he swayed suddenly, and would have fallen had he not been caught by a merchant who stood behind him and by the monk who served as deacon.

"What's the matter? Father Sergius! Dear heart!"—women's voices sounded. "The Lord preserve us! You're as pale as a sheet!"

But Father Sergius quickly recovered himself and, though very pale, brushed aside the merchant and the deacon and continued to sing. The deacon, Father Serapion, and the attendants, and Sofia Ivanovna, a lady who lived always near the hermitage and made it her business to look after Father Sergius—all begged him to break off the service.

"It's nothing, nothing," Father Sergius murmured, his lips, beneath his moustache, curving in the shadow of a smile. "Don't interrupt the service."

To himself he thought, "The saints did thus."

And, at once—

"Saint! Holy angel of God!" came Sofia Ivanovna's voice, behind him, and the voice of the merchant who had supported him. He would hear no persuasion, but continued to sing. Crowding together, they all returned through the narrow passageway to the tiny church; and there, though he abridged it slightly, he completed the service.

Immediately after the service Father Sergius blessed all present and went out of doors, to a bench that stood in the shade of some elms by the entrance to the caves. He thought to rest there a while, in the fresh air; for he

felt the need of it. But the moment he appeared the waiting people crowded about him, asking his blessing, seeking counsel and aid. There were women among these pilgrims who spent their lives in wandering from holy place to holy place, from *starets* to *starets*, touched to tears at the sight of any *starets*, of anything considered holy. Father Sergius knew this, the most common, the most irreligious type, cold-hearted, conventional. There were men among the pilgrims, discharged soldiers for the most part, who had somehow lost their place in normal life; old men, poverty-stricken and in their majority drunkards, who wandered from monastery to monastery for the alms to be got along the way. There were peasants, too, among the pilgrims, ignorant men and women, with their selfish demands for healing or for advice in the settlement of the most practical, worldly affairs: marrying off a daughter, or renting a village shop, or the purchase of land, or remission of the sin of a child overlain in sleep or begotten out of wedlock. All this was long familiar, and held no interest for Father Sergius. He knew that these people could tell him nothing new, that they could evoke no religious feeling in his heart; yet he liked to see them, as a throng which

needed and treasured his presence, his word and blessing. And so, while he was irked by this throng, it was at the same time a source of pleasure. Father Serapion began to thrust the pilgrims back, declaring that Father Sergius was tired. But Father Sergius said that he would receive the people—and, as he spoke, recalled the words of the Gospel, “Suffer them [children] to come unto me”; and, recalling this passage, felt a warm glow of self-approval.

He got up and went to the railing, where they were crowding, and began to bless them and to answer their questions, in a voice so weak that he himself was deeply touched by it. But, however he might wish to, he was not able to receive them all. Again the darkness swept down over him, and he swayed, and seized at the railing for support. Again the blood rushed to his head, and his face first paled, then suddenly flushed.

“You must wait until tomorrow, I’m afraid. I can do no more today,” he said, and, with one general blessing for all, turned back to his bench. The merchant took his arm again, and led him to the bench, and helped him to sit down.

"Father!" people were crying in the crowd.
"Father! Father! Don't abandon us! We are lost without you!"

Having settled Father Sergius on his bench under the elms, the merchant now assumed police duties, and set energetically to work to disperse the throng. True, he kept his voice low, so that Father Sergius would not hear him. But his words were angry and determined:

"Be off, be off! He blessed you, didn't he? Well, then, what more do you want? Be off. Or I'll help you off—that I will! Get along, get along! You, there, in the black foot wrappings—get along, get along, old woman! Where d'you think you're pushing to? You've been told once—no more today. Try again tomorrow. Today, he's all worn out."

"Just one look," the old woman pleaded.
"Just one look at his sweet face."

"I'll teach you to look! Where d'you think you're pushing to?"

Father Sergius noticed that the merchant seemed to be going about things rather too severely, and said faintly to his attendant that the people should not be driven away. Father Sergius knew that the merchant would drive them off anyway; and he very much

wanted to be alone, so that he might rest. But he sent his attendant with this message for the impression it would make.

"All right, all right," the merchant answered. "I'm not driving them away. I'm trying to teach them sense. Leave them alone, and they'd wear a man to death. They have no hearts—care for nobody but themselves. Get away, I tell you! Get away! You can come tomorrow."

And, in the end, the merchant drove them all away.

The merchant's zeal rose in part from a love of order and a love of driving people, ordering them about; but mainly from the need he had of Father Sergius' aid. He was a widower, with an only daughter who was ill and could not be married off; and he had brought his daughter here, a distance of fourteen hundred versts, for Father Sergius to heal her. He had tried several cures, in the two years of her illness. First, there had been the clinic at the gubernia centre, a university town. That had not done any good. Then he had tried a peasant healer in the Samara Gubernia. She had been a little better after that. Then he had taken her to a Moscow doctor, who charged no end of money

and did no good at all. Then someone had told him of Father Sergius' cures, and he had brought her here. So that, when he had driven all the people off, the merchant came up to Father Sergius and, without preliminaries, dropped to his knees and began loudly:

"Sainted father, grant thy blessing to heal my daughter who is ailing from her pain and from her ailment. Dare I to thy holy feet bring my great plea?"

And he joined his hands in a gesture of appeal.

All this was said and done as though it were a formula clearly and unquestionably defined by law and custom; as though it were only thus, and in no other conceivable way, that one might and must request healing for one's daughter. It was done with such confidence that even to Father Sergius it almost began to seem the proper way of speech and conduct. Still, he bade the merchant get up and explain his trouble. The merchant said that his daughter, a girl of twenty-two, had been taken ill two years past, after the sudden death of her mother—had squawked, as he put it, and lost her wits. And so he had brought her here, a distance of fourteen hun-

dred versts, and she was waiting at the hostel for Father Sergius to send for her. She went nowhere by day, being afraid of daylight, and could only come out after the sun was down.

"Is she very weak, then?" Father Sergius asked.

"No, I wouldn't call her weak, and she's got flesh enough on her, only she's nervasteenic—that's what the doctor called it. If Father Sergius would only say the word, I'd have her here in a jiffy. Sainted father, revive a parent's heart, restore his line, let your prayers heal his daughter from her illness."

And again the merchant threw himself down on his knees, and bowed his head side-wise over his cupped hands. Father Sergius once more bade him get up; sighed heavily over the thought of how difficult his labours were, and how submissively, for all that, he pursued them—and, after a moment's silence, said:

"Very well. Bring her this evening, and I'll pray for her. But I'm tired now"—and his eyelids drooped. "I'll let you know."

The merchant left, tiptoeing across the sand—which only made his boots squeak the louder. Father Sergius remained alone.

All the days of Father Sergius' life were crowded with services and with visitors. But this had been a particularly difficult day. In the morning there had been a visiting dignitary, who talked with him endlessly. And then a lady had come, with her son. This son, a young professor, was an atheist; and his mother, a fervent believer and devoted to Father Sergius, had brought him here and begged Father Sergius to talk to him. It had been a very difficult talk. The young man, evidently reluctant to argue with a monk, had agreed with everything that Father Sergius said, as one agrees with the weak. But Father Sergius had seen clearly that the young man did not believe, and that, nonetheless, he was happy, comfortable, at ease. It was unpleasant to Father Sergius, now, to recall that conversation.

"Something to eat, Father," his attendant said.

"Yes. Bring me something."

The attendant went into the little cell that had been built a few paces from the entrance to the cave, and again Father Sergius was alone.

The time had long since passed when Father Sergius lived in solitude, and did all his

work himself, and ate nothing but the communion loaf and plain black bread. Long since, it had been urged upon him that he had not the right to neglect his health; and he was served Lenten, but wholesome food. Though he ate little, it was a great deal more than formerly; and, whereas formerly he had eaten always with repulsion and consciousness of sin, he now often took great pleasure in his food. So it was today. He ate some porridge, and, with his tea, half of the white bread that was brought him.

The attendant left, and he remained alone on his bench under the elms.

It was a beautiful May evening. The leaves had only just uncurled on birch, elm, aspen, bird-cherry, and oak. The bird-cherry bushes beyond the elms were in full bloom, and the blossoms had not yet begun to fall. Nightingales were singing—one close by, and two or three in the bushes down by the river bank. A song sounded far over the river, where working folk, probably, were returning home after the day's labour. The sun, sinking beyond the woods, sent its slanted beams in a bright spray through the foliage, and all that part of the world was light green, while

the rest was dark. May beetles were flying, bumping, falling.

After his supper Father Sergius prayed mentally the prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy upon us," and then began to chant a psalm. While he was chanting, a sparrow skipped suddenly down from a bush nearby and began hopping towards him, chirping merrily—then took fright at something and flew away. Father Sergius went on to a prayer in which he spoke of his renunciation of the world. He recited it hurriedly, in order the sooner to send for the merchant and his ailing daughter; for she interested him. She interested him as a diversion, as somebody new; interested him, also, because she and her father thought him a saint, one whose prayers God granted. He rebuked those who spoke of him as of a saint, but in the depths of his heart thought himself truly one.

He often wondered that he, Stepan Kasat-sky, should have become so extraordinarily saintly, a veritable worker of miracles. But that he had, there could not be the slightest doubt. He could not refuse to believe in miracles he himself had witnessed, from that first sickly boy and to the last old woman

who had regained her sight as a result of his prayer.

Strange as it might seem, it was true. And the merchant's daughter interested him because she was new, and because she believed in him, and, too, because he might once more, in curing her, confirm his power of healing, and his fame. "People come from thousands of versts around," he thought to himself. "The newspapers write about it. His Majesty knows of it. It's known in Europe, in atheistic Europe." But suddenly he was struck with shame at his vainglory. And again he began a prayer to God.

"Lord, King of heaven, consoler, soul of truth, come, take up Thy abode in us, and cleanse us from all sin, and save and glorify our souls. Cleanse me from the sin of vainglory that has seized upon me," he prayed—and recalled how often he had prayed thus and how vain, as yet, had been his prayers. For others, his prayers brought miraculous healing; yet for himself he could not gain from God the liberation he sought from so mean a passion.

He recalled his prayers in the first years of his life here, when he had prayed God to grant him chastity, humility, and love; recalled

how, in those years, it had seemed to him that God had heeded his prayers; how he had remained chaste, and had struck off his finger. And he lifted his hand and kissed the shrivelled stump of that finger. It seemed to him now that he had been truly humble in those years, when he so loathed himself for his sinful desires; and it seemed to him, too, that in those years he had had love in his heart—for he recalled the emotion with which he had encountered an old man who came to him then, a drunken soldier who demanded money, and, yes, *her*. Well, and now? And he asked himself: was there anyone he loved? Did he love Sofia Ivanovna, or Father Sera-pion? Did he feel any love for all those people who had come to him today? For that learned young man to whom he had talked so instructively, concerned only to demonstrate his own mental powers and unforget-tten education? People's love was pleasant, was necessary to him; but he felt no answer-ing love for them. He had no love now in his heart; had no humility, no, nor chastity.

It had pleased him that the merchant's daughter was a girl of twenty-two, and he had wanted to know whether she was pleasing to look upon. And in asking whether she

was very weak, his real purpose had been to discover whether or not she had the charms of femininity.

"Can I really have fallen so low?" he wondered. "Lord, help me, restore me, my Lord and God." And, folding his hands, he began to pray. The nightingales were in full song. A May beetle buzzed past his ear and began crawling along the nape of his neck. He brushed it off. "But—does He exist? Am I not knocking at locked doors? Locked from without, with a lock that I might easily see? Nightingales, May beetles, Nature—are not these the lock? Suppose that young man was right?" And he began to pray aloud; and he prayed long, until all such thoughts vanished and he was calm and confident once more. Then he tinkled his bell, and when his attendant appeared said that the merchant and his daughter might come to him now.

The merchant came, leading his daughter by the arm. He led her into the cell, and immediately left.

The daughter was a fair-haired and very fair-complexioned girl, pale and plump, and meek in the extreme; with the face of a frightened child and the figure of a mature woman. Father Sergius had remained on his

bench by the entrance to the cell. When the girl came past, and paused beside him, and he blessed her, he was struck with horror at the way in which his eyes probed her body. She went inside, leaving him with the feeling that something had stung him painfully. By her face, he realized that she was sensual and feeble-minded. He got up and went into the cell. She was sitting on a stool, waiting for him.

She got up when he came in.

"I want to go home," she said.

"Don't be afraid," he answered. "Tell me what ails you?"

"Everything ails me," she said; and suddenly her face lit in a smile.

"You will be well," he told her. "Pray."

"What's the good of praying? I've prayed and prayed, and nothing comes of it." She was still smiling. "You pray, and lay your hands on me. I've dreamt about you."

"What did you dream?"

"I dreamt you laid your hand on my breast, like this"—and she took his hand and pressed it to her breast. "Just here."

He had given her his right hand.

"What's your name?" he asked, trembling

from head to foot. He was vanquished, he knew. Desire had grown past all control.

"Marya. Why?"

She took his hand and kissed it, and then put her arm around him and drew him close.

"What are you doing?" he said. "Marya! You're Satan!"

"Ah, well, it's no great harm."

And, still embracing him, she sat down on the bed and pulled him down beside her.

At dawn, he went out to the porch.

Had it really all happened? Soon her father would come. She would tell. She was Satan. What to do, what to do? Ah! There it was—the hatchet he had struck his finger off with! He seized the hatchet and turned back to his cell.

His attendant hurried up.

"Do you need firewood? Let me have the hatchet."

He gave up the hatchet and returned to his cell. She lay there, asleep. He glanced at her in horror. Then he went to the back of the cell, took down the peasant clothing hanging there, got into it, found the scissors and cut his hair, and went out and down by the

path that led to the river. It was four years since he had been there last.

There was a road along the river bank. He took that road, and followed it until noon. At noon he turned into a field of rye, and lay down among the rye. Towards evening he approached a village. He did not enter the village, but turned off to the bluff river bank.

Early morning, perhaps half an hour before sunrise. Everything was grey and gloomy. A cold morning wind blew from the west. Yes, the thing must be ended. There was no God. How end it? A leap into the water? But he could swim. He would not drown. Hanging? Yes, by his belt. From a tree. Death seemed so easily accomplished, so very close, that horror swept over him. He wanted to pray, as always in moments of despair. But there was no one to pray to. There was no God. He lay there, his head propped on his hand. And suddenly he felt such a great need of sleep that he could no longer keep his head propped on his hand. He let his hand drop, and laid his head on his outstretched arm, and immediately fell asleep. But this sleep lasted only an instant. He woke at once, and his mind filled with memories. Or perhaps he was simply dreaming.

He recalled himself as a boy, hardly more than a child, at his mother's country home. And a carriage drove up to the house, and out of the carriage got Uncle Nikolai Sergeyevich, with his great black spade-shaped beard, and with him Pashenka—a skinny little girl, with big, meek eyes set in a timid, pitiful little face. And she was brought to the boys in the children's room, this Pashenka, and they were expected to play with her. But that was dull. She was so silly. And in the end they made a mock of her. They would not believe she could swim, insisted that she show them how she did it. She got down on the floor and showed them. And they all laughed aloud, and thought her a great fool. And she realized it, and red spots came out on her face, and she looked pitiful, so pitiful that he felt ashamed; and he was never, never to forget that twisted smile of hers, so gentle and submissive.

Then he recalled the times when he had seen her after that. He had seen her years later, just before he entered the monastery—a married woman, wife to some country land-owner who had squandered all her fortune, and who beat her. She had had two children, a boy and a girl, but the boy had died young.

Sergius recalled her as he had seen her then, so unhappy. Later, at the monastery, he had seen her again, a widow. She had been the same as ever—not stupid, exactly, but somehow insipid; insignificant and pitiful. She had come to the monastery with her daughter and her daughter's fiancé. And they had been poor. Later still, he had heard that she lived in some small town, an uyezd centre, and that she was very poor.

Why on earth did he keep thinking of her, he wondered. But he could not stop thinking of her. Where was she now? What had become of her? Was she wretched and unhappy still, as she had been when she got down on the floor to show that she could swim? Ah, but why think of her? He was forgetting! It was time to end things.

And again fear swept over him. And again, to escape the thought of what must be, he began to think of Pashenka.

Thus he lay for some time, thinking now of the end that he must make of himself, now again of Pashenka. The thought of Pashenka seemed to carry deliverance. In the end, he fell asleep. And in his sleep he dreamed that an angel came to him and told him, "Go thou to Pashenka and learn from her

what thou must do, and wherein lies thy sin, and wherein thy salvation."

Waking, he decided that this had been a vision sent by God. And he rejoiced, and decided to do as he had been bidden in this vision. He knew the town she lived in. It was three hundred versts away. And he set out for that town.

VIII

Pashenka had long since ceased to be little Pashenka. She was Praskovya Mikhailovna, now—an old woman, gaunt and wrinkled, mother-in-law to a luckless and drink-addicted government clerk named Mavrikyev. She lived in the little town where her son-in-law had held his last position; and there she supported her family: daughter, and sickly, neurasthenic son-in-law, and five grandchildren. She supported them by giving music lessons to the daughters of the local merchants, at fifty kopeks an hour. Some days she had four lessons, some days five, so that she managed to earn something like sixty rubles a month. And so they lived, for the time being, until some new position for the son-in-law should be forthcoming. Praskovya Mikhailovna had written to all her relatives and ac-

quaintances, asking their help in getting him a position. She had written, too, to Sergius. But he had left the hermitage before her letter arrived.

It was Saturday, and Praskovya Mikhailovna was preparing the dough for a batch of the sweet raisin-bread that she had learned to bake, long years ago, from the serf cook in her father's kitchen. It was to be a Sunday treat for her grandchildren.

Masha, her daughter, was busy with the baby. The eldest of the children, a boy and a girl, were at school. The son-in-law had fallen into a doze, after a sleepless night. Praskovya Mikhailovna, too, had had very little sleep. Far into the night, she had talked with Masha, trying to soothe her anger against her husband.

He was but a weak creature, Praskovya Mikhailovna realized, incapable of changing his ways of speech or his ways of life. Nor, she realized, could his wife's reproaches do any good. And she did everything in her power to smooth things over, to prevent reproaches, to prevent ill feeling. With an acuteness that was almost physical pain, she suffered from all unkindness in human relations. She saw so clearly that it could do no good, that it

could only make things worse. It was not that she actually thought all this out. Simply, she suffered at the sight of malice, as at an evil odour, or a harsh sound, or a blow.

Proud of her skill, she was explaining to Lukerya how the dough must be mixed, when little Misha, her grandson, came running in—a boy of six, in a pinafore, his rickety legs cased in much-darned stockings. He looked frightened.

"Granny! There's such a dreadful old man, asking for you!"

Lukerya went to the door.

"So there is, mistress. Some sort of pilgrim."

Praskovya Mikhailovna brushed the flour from her bony elbows, wiped her hands on her apron, and was about to leave the kitchen, to fetch five kopeks for the pilgrim from her purse; but recalled that there was nothing smaller in her purse than a ten-kopek piece, and decided to give bread instead; but then, as she was turning to the cupboard, flushed suddenly at the thought that she had begrudged alms, and, telling Lukerya to cut a good slice of bread, went to get the ten kopeks as well. She would give double alms, to make up for her stinginess.

She asked the pilgrim's pardon as she offered him the bread and the coin. Proffering them, far from pride in her generosity, she felt but shame that she gave so little—so impressive was his figure.

He had begged his way, in Christ's name, over a distance of three hundred versts. He was gaunt, ragged, weather-beaten, his hair cut short. He wore rough, peasant hat and boots. Yet for all that, and for all the humility with which he bowed low in the doorway, Sergius still retained the impressive aspect that so attracted people to him. But Praskovya Mikhailovna did not recognize him. Nor could she well have recognized him, not having seen him for almost thirty years.

"Pardon, father. You're hungry, perhaps."

He took the bread and the money. And Praskovya Mikhailovna wondered that he did not go, but stood there, looking at her.

"Pashenka. It's you I've come to. Don't turn me away."

And the beautiful dark eyes, looking intently, appealingly into hers, filmed with glistening tears. And the lips, beneath the greying moustache, trembled pitifully.

Praskovya Mikhailovna's lips parted, and her hand flew to her withered breast. Her eyes searched the pilgrim's face.

"It can't be! Stepan! Sergius! Father Sergius!"

"Yes," Sergius answered, very low. "Only—not Sergius, not Father Sergius, but the evil sinner Stepan Kasatsky, a lost and evil sinner. Help me. Don't turn me away."

"It can't be! How you have humbled yourself! Ah, come in, come in."

She held out her hand. But he did not take her hand. He followed her into the house.

But where was she to put him? They had very little space. There was one tiny room, hardly more than a closet, that had been hers at first; but then she had turned even this closet over to Masha. And there Masha sat now too, rocking the baby to sleep.

"Sit here for just a moment," Praskovya Mikhailovna said, pointing to a bench in the kitchen.

Sergius sat down at once, and removed the pack from his back, slipping the straps first from one shoulder, then from the other, with what had clearly become habitual movements.

"Dear God, dear God, that you should have humbled yourself so! Such great glory, and —all at once...."

Sergius did not answer, except by a gentle smile, as he laid his pack down on the bench.

"Do you know who that is, Masha?"

And Praskovya Mikhailovna whispered to her daughter who their visitor was. And, together, they removed Masha's bedding, and carried out the baby in its cradle, freeing the little room for Sergius.

Praskovya Mikhailovna took Sergius to his room.

"You can rest here. I'm sorry it's so small. I must go now."

"Where to?"

"It's these lessons that I give. I'm ashamed even to tell you. I teach music."

"Music? That's very good. Only—you see, Praskovya Mikhailovna, it's a serious matter that brings me to you. When could I have a talk with you?"

"It will be a great happiness to me. Will this evening be all right?"

"Of course. Only—one more thing. Don't tell people who I am. It was only to you I could trust myself. No one knows where I've gone. It's very necessary."

"Oh! And I told my daughter!"

"Then ask her not to speak of it."

Sergius pulled off his boots, lay down, and fell asleep at once, after a sleepless night and a tramp of forty versts.

When Praskovya Mikhailovna returned, Sergius was awake, waiting for her in the little room. He had not come out to dinner, but had had some soup and porridge that Lukarya brought him.

"You're earlier than you promised," Sergius said. "How is that? Can we have our talk now?"

"To think that I should be granted such happiness, such a visitor! What have I done to deserve it? Well, and so I just skipped a lesson. I'll make it up afterwards.... I'd been hoping and planning to visit you. I wrote to you. And now—such unexpected happiness!"

"Pashenka! What I say to you now—receive it as holy confession, made before God, in my hour of death. Pashenka! I am no holy man, no, not even a simple, ordinary man. I am a sinner, a vile, evil, benighted, presumptuous!"

tuous sinner. I am worse—perhaps not than all men; that I cannot say—but worse than the very worst of men."

At first Pashenka stared at him, wide-eyed. How could she believe him? Then, when she really began to believe, she touched his hand with hers and said, smiling sorrowfully:

"Perhaps you're exaggerating, Stepan."

"No, Pashenka. I'm a fornicator. I'm a murderer. I'm a blasphemer and a deceiver."

"Dear God! How can it be?" Praskovya Mikhailovna whispered.

"But life must be lived. And I, who thought I knew all there was to know, who advised others how to live their lives—I know nothing at all, and I have come to learn from you."

"What are you saying, Stepan? You're making fun of me. Why do people always make fun of me?"

"Well, say I'm making fun, if you like. Only tell me: how do you live? And how have you spent your life?"

"I? Why, I spent it in the worst and vilest way. And now God is punishing me, and rightly, and life is so bad, so bad...."

"How did your marriage come about? And how did you live when you were married?"

"It was all bad, all bad. How I married? I fell in love, the wickedest way. Father was against it. But I wouldn't hear of anything. And so I was married. And when I was married, instead of helping my husband, I tormented him by my jealousy, that I simply couldn't conquer."

"He drank, I was told."

"Yes. But I—I couldn't learn to quiet his nerves. I kept reproaching him. And, after all, it's really a disease. He couldn't help himself, and I remember still how I locked it away from him. And we had dreadful scenes."

And her beautiful eyes, turned to Kasatsky, clouded with pain at the remembrance.

Kasatsky recalled the rumours he had heard, that Pashenka's husband beat her. And, looking now at her gaunt, shrivelled neck, and the tendons standing out behind her ears, and her knot of thin hair, half brown, half grey, he seemed to see it all.

"And then I was left alone, with two children, and with absolutely no means."

"Why, but you had land."

"We sold that while Vasya was still alive, and . . . well, the money all went. So that—we had to live, somehow, and there was nothing I knew how to do. Like all us daughters

of the gentry. Only I was particularly bad, particularly helpless. We lived, somehow, on the last remnants. I sent the children to school, and studied a little myself, too. And then Mitya took sick, in his fourth year at school, and the Lord took him from me. Masha fell in love with Vanya—that's my son-in-law. Well, and—he's a good soul, only unhappy. He isn't well."

"Mother!" the daughter's voice broke in. "Take the youngster. I can't do everything!"

Praskovya Mikhailovna started. She went quickly out of the room, in her down-at-heel shoes, and immediately returned with a two-year-old boy in her arms. The child kept throwing itself back, and pulling at her kerchief.

"Where was I? Ah, yes. Vanya had a position here, a good position, and such a pleasant chief. But he couldn't go on any longer. He had to resign."

"What's wrong with him?"

"Neurasthenia. It's a dreadful sickness. We've consulted about it, but—he needs to go away, and we haven't the means. But I keep hoping it will pass. He has no pain in particular, only...."

"Lukerya!" came the sick man's voice, weak and querulous. "They're always sending her off somewhere, just when she's needed. Mother!"

"Coming!" Praskovya Mikhailovna called, breaking off her tale once more. "He hasn't had his dinner yet. He can't eat with all of us."

She left the room, and could be heard moving about the house. Then she returned, drying her thin, sun-brown hands.

"Well, and so we go on. Always complaining, always dissatisfied, and yet, praise be to God, the children are all good, and well, and life is really tolerable. Ah, but why talk of me?"

"What do you live on?"

"Why, I earn a little. Music always seemed so dull to me, yet how it helps me now!"

Her hand lay on the bureau beside her. A small, thin hand. She worked her slender fingers, as though playing an exercise.

"What are you paid for your lessons?"

"A ruble, or fifty kopeks. Some pay thirty. They're all so kind to me."

"Well, and do they make progress?" Katsky asked, with the ghost of a smile deep in his eyes.

Praskovya Mikhailovna did not believe, at first, that he was asking seriously. She looked questioningly into his eyes.

"Yes, they do. There's one very nice little girl, the butcher's daughter. A kind, good girl. Of course, if I were good for anything, I'd manage to find Vanya some position, through my father's old connections. But I'm no good, and so I've brought them all to this."

"So, so," Kasatsky murmured, bowing his head. "Well, and church life, Pashenka—do you take any part in that?"

"Ah, that's best not talked of. It's so bad, the way I've come to neglect it. We fast in Lent, and go to church. But often I don't go for months. I send the children."

"And why don't you go yourself?"

"Well, to tell you the truth"—and her face flushed—"I don't like to shame my daughter, and the children, going in my shabby clothes. And I have nothing new. And—well, I suppose I'm simply lazy."

"Do you pray at home, then?"

"Yes, but it's not real prayer—just mechanical. That's no way, I know, but I have no real feeling. Only the realization of my own vileness."

"So, so. I see, I see," Kasatsky responded, as though in approval.

The son-in-law called again.

"Coming, coming," she answered, and, setting her kerchief to rights, left the room once more.

This time her absence was more lengthy. Returning finally, she found Kasatsky sitting as before, bowed forward, with his elbows on his knees. But now his pack was on his back.

When she came in, carrying a small tin lamp without a shade, he lifted his beautiful, weary eyes to hers with a deep, deep sigh.

"I haven't told them who you are," she began timidly. "I just said—a pilgrim, of the nobility, and that I'd known you once. Won't you come to the dining room to tea?"

"No."

"Then I'll bring you some here."

"No. There's no need. God save you, Pashenka. I must be going. If you feel for me, tell no one that you've seen me. By the living God I adjure you, tell no one of it. And thank you. I would bow to the ground before you—but that would embarrass you, I know. Thank you, and forgive me, in Christ's name."

"Give me your blessing."

"God will bless you. Forgive me, in Christ's name."

And he would have gone, but she detained him, and brought him bread, and rusks, and butter. All this he took, and left.

It was dark, and he was hardly two houses away before she lost sight of him, and could only tell he was there because the archpriest's dog began to bark at him.

"So that was the meaning of my dream. Pashenka is precisely what I ought to have been, and what I have not been. I lived for man, pretending to live for God; but she lives for God, imagining that she lives for man. Yes, one good deed, a cup of water offered without thought of reward, is dearer than all those I have helped for the sake of man's approval. But"—he asked himself—"was there not some particle of the true wish to serve God?" And he had to answer, "Yes, but all that was defiled, overgrown by the wish for glory among men. No, there is no God for one who has lived, like me, for glory among men. But I shall go, then, and search for Him."

And he went, as he had come to Pashenka, wandering from village to village, now join-

ing, now parting with other pilgrims, men and women; asking food and shelter in Christ's name. At times, some ill-tempered housewife might scold at him, or some peasant in his cups abuse him; but far more often he would be given food and drink, and even provision for his way. His appearance, betraying his aristocratic origin, inclined some people in his favour. Others, on the contrary, seemed well pleased to see one of the gentry reduced to beggary. But his gentle ways conquered all with whom he came in contact.

Often, finding the Gospel in some home, he would read aloud from it; and always, everywhere, people would listen, touched and amazed, as to something ever new, though long familiar.

If he had opportunity to help people, by advice, or by writing letters or documents for the illiterate, or by conciliating wranglers, he never heard their gratitude, for he would leave before it could be tendered. And, by little and little, he began to find his God.

One day he was on the road in company with two old women and a discharged soldier. Some gentlefolk stopped them—a gentleman and lady in a gig drawn by a smart trotter, and another gentleman and lady on horse-

back. The riders were the husband and daughter of the lady in the gig; the other gentleman, apparently, a French visitor.

They stopped the wanderers to show their visitor *les pélérins*¹—men and women led by the superstition inherent in the Russian people to wander from place to place instead of working.

They spoke in French, thinking that the pilgrims could not understand them.

“*Demandez leur,*” the Frenchman said, “*s’ils sont bien sûrs de ce que leur pèlerinage est agréable à dieu.*”²

The question was put. The old women answered:

“As God may find it. Our feet have been to the shrine. Perhaps our hearts will be there.”

The soldier was asked. He replied that he was alone in the world, and had no place to stay.

Then they asked Kasatsky who he might be.

“A servant of God.”

“*Qu’est ce qu’il dit? Il ne répond pas.*”³

“*Il dit qu’il est un serviteur de dieu.*”⁴

¹ Pilgrims.

² “Ask them whether they feel sure that their pilgrimage is pleasing to God.”

³ “What does he say? He doesn’t answer.”

⁴ “He says he’s a servant of God.”

"Cela doit être un fils de prêtre. Il a de la race. Avez vous de la petite monnaie?"¹

The Frenchman had some silver in his pocket. And he gave each of the pilgrims twenty kopeks.

"Mais dites leur que ce n'est pas pour des cierges que je leur donne, mais pour qu'ils se régalent de thé."² Tea, tea"—and he smiled. "Pour vous, mon vieux,"³ he concluded, patting Kasatsky's shoulder with his gloved hand.

"Christ save you," Kasatsky responded, hat in hand, bowing his bald head.

And this encounter brought Kasatsky particular happiness, because he had been able to disregard what people thought of him, had been able to do the simplest, the easiest thing—humbly accepting twenty kopeks, and then giving it away to a comrade, a blind beggar. The less human opinion came to mean to him, the more strongly he could feel his God.

¹ "A priest's son, probably. You can see he has good blood. Have you some small change?"

² "Only tell them it's not for candles I give it, but for them to have some tea."

³ "For you, Grandad."

Eight months passed in this way. In the ninth month, passing through a gubernia centre, Kasatsky was questioned at a shelter where he had spent the night with other wanderers; and as he could produce no passport, he was taken to the police station for further examination. Asked his name, and what he had done with his passport, he replied that he had no passport, and that he was a servant of God. He was tried as a vagrant, convicted, and exiled to Siberia.

In Siberia he settled on a rich peasant's farm, where he lives to this day. He works in this peasant's garden, and teaches the village children, and nurses the sick.

